

62-4775

10 July 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Maxwell D. Taylor
Military Representative of the President

1. Upon reading the Associated Press story, dateline Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on 8 July, reference criticisms of the implementation of U. S. policy in Vietnam, the Director asked that our Station Chief be queried as to his views.
2. Attached for your information is our outgoing message of 8 July and our Chief of Station reply dated 9 July.
3. Copies are being sent to Secretary McNamara, General Lemnitzer, and General Decker.

/s/

Marshall S. Carter
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy Director

Attachments

MSC:bec

Distribution:

- Orig & 1 - Adse (by hand-10 July)
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NEGATIVE REGISTRY FILE *White House*

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SUBJECT: Comments received by the Director of Central Intelligence from [] Chief of Station, Saigon, on 9 July 1962 concerning U.S. newspaper criticism of the Counterinsurgency Program for South Vietnam

"POINT-BY-POINT ANALYSIS NEWSPAPER ARTICLES SUMMARIZED BELOW.

AS GENERAL COMMENT, BELIEVE MR. PRICE'S CONCLUSIONS HIGHLY COLORED AND DESCRIPTION WAR AGAINST VIET CONG AS "FOULED UP," NOT ONLY INACCURATE BUT INJURIOUS JOINT US/VIETNAMESE EFFORTS, AND GRIST FOR COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA MILL. PRECISELY THIS KIND OF JOURNALISTIC SENSATIONALISM WHICH UNDERCUTS EFFORTS MADE BY OFFICIAL US COMMUNITY HERE GET DIEM REFORM PRACTICES VIS A VIS AMERICAN PRESS. DIEM BELIEVES, AND UNFORTUNATELY THIS KIND REPORTING TENDS TO BEAR HIM OUT, THAT REGARDLESS OF WHAT HIS GOVERNMENT DOES, AMERICAN PRESS WILL TWIST GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS GOOD OR BAD.

A. BELIEVE LOCAL MISSION ATTEMPTING MEET U.S. PRESS NEEDS FLEXIBLY AND FAIRLY.

B. WHILE TRUE DIEM ATTEMPTS MAINTAIN CAREFUL BALANCE POLITICAL FORCES WITHIN MILITARY COMMAND, HE SEEMS TO BE TRYING MAKE GOOD US LIMITED COMMAND SKILLS OF VNAF. WE ESTIMATE DIEM HAS MADE SHREWD PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF EACH OF HIS PRINCIPAL GENERALS. HE APPEARS AWARE THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, AND NATURALLY RELUCTANT ACCORD THEM AUTHORITY IN FIELDS WHERE WE BELIEVE THEY HAVE LITTLE COMPETENCE. SPECIFICALLY, ARVN CHIEF OF STAFF, GENERAL LE VAN TY, HAS BEEN MANY YEARS LITTLE MORE THAN FIGUREHEAD. WHAT RECOMMENDS TY MOST IS UNQUESTIONING LOYALTY TO DIEM. POWER BEHIND GENERAL STAFF, HOWEVER, IS VERY INTELLIGENT AND AMBITIOUS GENERAL NGUYEN VAN KHANH, AND

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HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY RESIDE IN HIM. CHIEF OF FIELD COMMAND, GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH (BIG MINH) COMMANDS RESPECT OF LARGE PART OF OFFICERS' CORPS. HOWEVER, GENERAL MINH FREQUENTLY BY-PASSED. CORPS COMMANDERS ARE MOST POWERFUL FIELD MILITARY OFFICERS. FIRST CORPS COMMANDER, GENERAL TRAN VAN DON, RATED BY MOST AMERICAN MILITARY AS TOP-NOTCH BUT CONVENTIONAL SOLDIER. DIEM CURRENTLY IRRITATED WITH DON FOR PROPOSING MAJOR OPERATION, LIMITED OBJECTIVE OF WHICH WOULD BE TO CLEAR 40 KILOMETERS ON EITHER SIDE OF RAILWAY AND ROUTE 1 IN QUANG NGAI PROVINCE. LONG DRAWN OUT AND INADEQUATE PLAN ENCOMPASSES EIGHTEEN MONTHS DURATION AND WOULD REQUIRE MANY MILLION DOLLARS. ADDITIONALLY, DON HAS MANEUVERED HIMSELF INTO SITUATION STATIC DEFENSE WITH INSUFFICIENT OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY. DON ALSO RELUCTANT CONCUR IN ARMING CIVILIAN VILLAGE DEFENDERS FIRST CORPS AREA. WITH EXCEPTION MANG BUC AREA, DON HAS LITTLE REGARD FOR MONTAGNARDS AND HAS NO PLAN OF HIS OWN TO WIN THESE ELEMENTS TO HIS SIDE. PRESIDENT DIEM ATTEMPTING MODIFY DON'S THINKING THESE POINTS. WE CONCUR IN DIEM'S ASSESSMENT NEEDS FIRST CORPS AREA, AND SUPPORT HIS EFFORTS THIS DIRECTION. IT NOTABLE DON IS NOT POLITICAL SUPPORTER OF DIEM, AND YET DIEM RETAINS DON FOR HIS MILITARY ABILITIES. SECOND CORPS COMMANDER, GENERAL TON THAT DINH, IS YOUNG VIGOROUS OFFICER WITH CONSIDERABLE APPRECIATION POLITICAL REALITIES HIS AREA AND STRONG AFFILIATION WITH NGO DINH CAN FACTION OF RULING CAN LAO PARTY. HE IS GOOD ORGANIZER AND ADMINISTRATOR, BUT SOMEWHAT WEAK TACTICIAN. GENERAL DINH HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN OPERATION HAI YEN II IN THE PHU YEN AREA. NOTABLE FEATURE THIS PLAN, WHICH HAS BEEN WRITTEN INTO NEW PLAN FOR CLEARANCE II CORPS, IS COMPLETE COORDINATION CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AUTHORITY AND

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UTILIZATION OF CIVILIAN IRREGULARS TO SUPPLEMENT ARVN AND THUS RELIEVE ARMY OF STATIC DEFENSE. IN SECOND CORPS, DINH HAS CONSIDERABLE AUTONOMY IN UTILIZATION TROOPS UNDER PRESIDENTIALLY APPROVED PLANS. HE, OF COURSE, SUBJECT TO POLITICAL INFLUENCE NGO DINH CAN. WOULD NOT CONCUR HIS OPERATIONS AGAINST VC ARE CHAOTIC. CRITICISM APPLIES WITH SOMEWHAT MORE FORCE TO THIRD CORPS COMMANDER, GENERAL LE VAN NGHIEM. GENERAL NGHIEM'S HQS IS IN SAIGON, AND AS HE HIMSELF BITTERLY POINTS OUT, THERE ARE MANY ARMCHAIR EXPERTS WHO ATTEMPT TO CONTROL HIS TROOPS, SITUATION WHICH FREQUENTLY LEADS TO CONFUSION IN TROOP OPERATIONAL COMMITMENT. MILITARILY, GENERAL NGHIEM'S ABILITIES APPEAR LIMITED, AND HIS PROMOTION TO THIRD CORPS COMMANDER APPARENTLY RESULTED FROM HIS CONNECTIONS IN THE CAN LAO PARTY. DELTA AREA, WHICH FALLS WITHIN HIS COMMAND, IS ALSO HISTORICALLY THE MOST HIGHLY INFESTED VC STRONGHOLD IN SOUTH VIETNAM, AND VC STRENGTH THERE STEMS FROM MANY YEARS OF IMPLANTATION OF VC CADRE. IN SUM, WITH RESPECT TO OPERATIONS AGAINST VC, PICTURE IN NORTHERN SOUTH VIETNAM SHOWS MODEST IMPROVEMENT. IN CENTRAL VIETNAM SECOND CORPS AREA, THERE IS AN INCREASING ATTEMPT TO MOBILIZE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ASSETS AGAINST VIET CONG, AND THIS IS SHOWING SOME MODERATE SIGNS OF SUCCESS. THIRD CORPS AREA SHOWS LESS IMPROVEMENT AND HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY MARKED BY INTERNECINE VNAF FACTIONAL CONFLICT.

C. INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM WHICH, STARTING FROM NOTHING, HAS MADE SOME STEADY IMPROVEMENT BOTH ON MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SIDE. WE ATTRIBUTE THIS IMPROVEMENT TO IMPACT OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ADVISORS IN EACH PROVINCE, AND ON CIVILIAN SIDE THE REORGANIZATION AND

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STREAMLINING OF THE CIVILIAN SECURITY SERVICES. THESE CIVILIAN SERVICES HAVE DURING PAST SIX MONTHS REDUCED THEIR OPERATIONAL INITIATIVE DUE TO REORGANIZATION WHICH HAS BEEN UNDERWAY. HOWEVER, SAME SIX MONTHS HAVE BEEN UTILIZED FOR TRAINING AND EQUIPPING GVN CIVILIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES TO PERFORM NEWLY ASSIGNED FUNCTIONS UNDER NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE. THIS SLOW-DOWN PERIOD AT AN END, AND WE BELIEVE THE CIVILIAN SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY IS SOMEWHAT STRONGER AND BETTER PREPARED TO PERFORM ITS TASKS THAN BEFORE. WHILE STRENGTHENING OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HAS BEEN SLOWER, PROGRESS NEVERTHELESS PERCEPTIBLE. NO SUBSTANCE TO ALLEGATION OF "NEAR COLLAPSE."

D. WE ARE IN NO POSITION MAKE ACCURATE ASSESSMENT BUT, LOOKING AT MAAG FROM OUTSIDE, THERE SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERABLE EFFORT BY U.S. MILITARY IN SAIGON TO MOVE MAXIMUM OF SUPPORTABLE ELEMENTS TO FIELD AND TO IMPROVE AND STREAMLINE TRAINING PROCESSES TO ALLOW FOR MOBILE USE OF FORCES. EFFICIENCY OF ANY MAAG IS LIMITED BY TREATIES WHICH SPECIFY THAT ANY MILITARY EQUIPMENT ARRIVING WITHIN HOST NATION AUTOMATICALLY BECOMES HOST NATION PROPERTY AND CAN ONLY BE ISSUED UNDER ITS CONTROL. THIS MEANS THAT, IF HOST NATION LOGISTICS SYSTEM IS INEFFICIENT, RECEIPT OF NEEDED ARMS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT AT RIGHT PLACE AND RIGHT TIME IS ONLY SLOWLY ACHIEVED. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT MACV AND MAAG, BY RELATIVE STANDARDS SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS ELSEWHERE AND IN RELATIONSHIP SIZE AND SPEED OF BUILDUP, ARE STEADILY IMPROVING.

E. WITH REGARD TO USE OF SPECIAL FORCES

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AND FULLY COMMITTED TRAINING INDIGENOUS VILLAGE DEFENDERS, STRIKE FORCES, CIVIC ACTION TEAMS, TRAILWATCHERS, AND SPECIAL CLANDESTINE UNITS FOR COMMITMENT SOUTH LAOS. WE NOT AWARE SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING ANY MILITARY RECRUITS EXCEPT VIETNAMESE SPECIAL FORCES RECRUITS. AS YOU AWARE FROM RECENT PERSONAL INSPECTION AND AUGMENTATION PLAN, SPECIAL FORCES TRAINING ACTIVITIES ARE SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT CIVILIAN IRREGULARS WHO TO RETURN VC INFESTED AREAS. VIETNAMESE SEIZURE OF INITIATIVE AGAINST VC IS DEPENDENT ON ARVN RELEASE FROM STATIC DEFENSE DUTIES. THIS RELEASE IN TURN DEPENDENT ON WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY OF VILLAGES AND STRATEGIC HAMLETS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES INCREASINGLY WITH SUPPORT OF SELF-DEFENSE CORPS, CIVIL GUARD, AND CIDG. WE OPTIMISTIC OVER SUCCESS OF STRATEGIC HAMLET AND OF CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE PROGRAMS WHICH HAVE AS THEIR ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE FREEING ARVN FROM GUARD DUTY TO STRIKE OUT INTO VC-CONTROLLED AREAS. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT CURRENT AND AUGMENTED SPECIAL FORCES TEAMS IN SVN WILL PRODUCE SIXTY THOUSAND CIDG WITHIN TWELVE-MONTH PERIOD.

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F. STUDIES RECENTLY MADE [REDACTED] ATTEMPTED STATISTICAL ANALYSIS VC KILLED AND CAPTURED AS COMPARED GVN KILLED AND CAPTURED.* WHILE RECOGNIZING LARGE POSSIBILITY ERROR DUE TO CONFLICTING REPORTING AND TENDENCY GVN REGARD ALL BODIES ON BATTLEFIELD AS VC, IT IS POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH A TREND WHICH BEARS OUT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE REMARKS QUOTED IN THE AP STORY. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY COMMENTED ON THE LESSER NUMBER VC GUERRILLA ATTACKS, WHICH BETTER SUPPORTED IN FACT, THOUGH INCREASED US AID PROBABLY NOT WHOLE STORY EXPLAINING

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DECREASE. RAINY SEASON ALSO FACTOR PLUS POSSIBILITY VC REGROUPING INTO LARGER UNITS TO BRING MORE FORCE TO BEAR AT ONSET DRY SEASONS.

G. COMPLAINTS OF FORCED RESETTLEMENT AND LOW REGARD VIETNAMESE FOR MONTAGNARDS UNDERSTOOD BY PRESIDENT DIEM. DIEM, HOWEVER, REGARDS FORCED RESETTLEMENT ONLY AS LAST RESORT, AND IN RECENT STATEMENT TO U.S. OFFICIAL, INDICATED ELEMENT OF FORCE SHOULD BE PRACTICED VERY SPARINGLY AND ONLY IN THOSE AREAS WHERE THERE ARE NO OTHER FEASIBLE MEANS REMOVE POPULATION FROM VC CONTROL. DIEM HAS ALSO BECOME AWARE NECESSITY WIN OVER MONTAGNARDS, AND MANY LEVELS GVN OFFICIALDOM INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZE POSSIBILITIES OF STATION-SPONSORED CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE PROGRAM AMONG MONTAGNARDS. OUTSTANDING REQUESTS FOR ARMING AND TRAINING MOUNTAIN TRIBES AS PART OF GENERAL CIDG PROGRAM OVER NEXT TWELVE-MONTH PERIOD NOW TOTALS APPROXIMATELY 48,000. TRADITIONAL ANTIPATHIES MOUNTAINS AND PLAINS PEOPLE STILL EXIST. PROGRESS WILL BE LONG PROCESS AND NOT WITHOUT SETBACKS. GVN NOW KNOWS, IF IT TO HOLD HIGH GROUND, IT MUST ACCEPT POPULATION LIVING THERE INTO FULLER PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR.

H. DIEM'S COMMAND STRUCTURE, LIKE THAT OF MOST OTHER NEWLY EMERGENT NATIONS, IS BUILT MORE ON PERSONALITIES THAN ON SOUND ORGANIZATION TECHNIQUE. THIS NECESSARY IN PART BECAUSE OF FEW QUALIFIED PERSONS AVAILABLE TO COMMAND. DIEM DOES HAVE WELL-FOUNDED FEARS OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION ORIGINATING IN THE MILITARY AND, CONSIDERING HIS PAST EXPERIENCE THIS REGARD, HIS DELEGATIONS AUTHORITY APPEAR INCREASINGLY LIBERAL. IN THIS CONNECTION, ALSO

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POINT OUT DIEM HAS VERY DELIBERATELY SHOWN VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN POPULATION BY ALLOWING AND ENCOURAGING ARMING OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF CIVILIANS. LEADER, JEALOUS OF HIS PERSONAL POWER AND AFRAID OF HIS PEOPLE, MIGHT WELL BE MORE CAUTIOUS THAN DIEM IN TRAINING AND ARMING SO MANY.

I. UNDOUBTEDLY, WAR MUST BE FOUGHT PRINCIPALLY BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE. REFERENCE TO POSITION AMERICANS AND FRENCH IN RELATIONSHIPS SOUTH VIETNAM SEEMS MISLEADING. MAJORITY VIETNAMESE REALIZE WE HAVE NO TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS AND ARE NOT HERE TO COLONIZE. EVEN REPEATED COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA CHARGES AMERICAN IMPERIALISM HAVE EVOKED VERY LITTLE RESPONSE FROM SOUTH VIETNAMESE POPULATION. WE BELIEVE THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION OF THE U.S. GOING IT ALONE IN VIETNAM. WHILE RELEASE OF COMMUNIST FORCES FROM ENGAGEMENT IN LAOS COULD LEAD TO COMMUNIST ESCALATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND A COMMITANT NECESSITY FOR U.S. COMMITMENTS, OUR POLITICAL POSITION IS SUCH THAT WE COULD NEVER BE AS ISOLATED AS FRENCH WHO WERE FIGHTING TO PRESERVE COLONIES AND SPECIAL POSITION.

J. HISTORY OF GUERRILLA WARS INDICATES LARGE NUMBER OF TROOPS MUST BE COMMITTED TO ELIMINATE GUERRILLAS. WAS NOT UNCOMMON IN GREECE TO COMMIT AS MANY AS 5,000 TROOPS TO CLEAR OUT AREA THOUGHT TO CONTAIN NO MORE THAN 50 TO 100 COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS. IN MALAYA, 4,000,000 TROOPS WERE COMMITTED FOR TWELVE YEARS AGAINST 8,000 HARD-CORE COMMUNISTS WHO WERE IN MAIN ETHNICALLY DISTINCT FROM MAJORITY OF MALAYAN POPULATION AND NOT SUPPORTED BY GEOGRAPHICALLY ADJACENT COMMUNIST TERRITORIES. THERE IS CERTAINLY ROOM FOR

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IMPROVEMENT IN VIETNAMESE ANTI-GUERRILLA TACTICS, BUT STATISTICS QUOTED SEPARATE STUDY N.Y. TIMES (AP) FROM SAIGON ARE MISLEADING AND DERIVE FROM LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF GUERRILLA WAR. ADMITTEDLY WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE LARGE ARVN SWEEPS MAKE MORE CONTACT WITH VC AND ACHIEVE MORE RESULTS THAN HAS HERETOFORE BEEN THE CASE. THERE IS STILL TENDENCY TO FIGHT FROM ROADS AND RIVERS WHICH AFTER ALL REPRESENT NATURAL ROUTES OF MILITARY MOVEMENT. ALSO, THIS IS RELATED IN PART TO LIMITED STRIKE FORCES AVAILABLE BECAUSE OF NECESSITY FOR STATIC DEFENSIVE DUTY BY ARMED FORCES. ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS HAVE BOGGED DOWN ON TWO OCCASIONS. ON THE WHOLE, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE OPERATED WITH EFFICIENCY IN SWAMPY AREAS AND HAVE PROVIDED PSYCHOLOGICAL SHOCK WHICH VC HAVE YET TO COUNTER. BOTH MACV AND ARVN ARE ENCOURAGED AT PERFORMANCE THESE VERSATILE VEHICLES AND NOW PLAN TO OBTAIN MORE. NO PLANS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE TO UTILIZE HEAVY TANKS OR OTHER SIMILAR WEAPONS IN AREAS OBVIOUSLY IMPASSIBLE TO THEM."

(NOTE: These studies en route Washington will be forwarded upon receipt.)

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25X1 FROM MR. MCCONE TO STATION CHIEF, SAIGON

1. WASHINGTON POST, WASHINGTON STAR, NY TIMES 8 JULY
HEADLINE AP STORY DATED FT. LEAVENWORTH, KAN., (BYLINE
BEN PRICE) CLAIMS "FIGHT TO SAVE SOUTH VIETNAM TO PUT IT
MILDLY, FOULED UP." PRICE'S SOURCES RETURNED ARMY PERSONNEL.

HIGHLIGHTS:

A. PENTAGON AND STATE EXTREMELY RELUCTANT DISCUSS
VIETNAMESE OPERATION.

B. DIEM HAS KEPT COMMAND STRUCTURE SO SPLIT AND
CONFUSED THAT MILITARY OPS AGAINST VC BORDER ON CHAOTIC.

C. INTEL SYSTEM, ON WHICH COUNTER GUERRILLA OPS
DEPEND, REPORTED NEAR COLLAPSE.

D. MIL ADV GRP SVN NOW TOP HEAVY AND UNWIELDLY AND
EFFICIENCY IMPERILED.

E. NO SECRET BRIG GEN. ROSSON DOWNRIGHT ANGRY OVER
"MISUSE HIS HIGHLY-TRAINED SPECIALISTS." ROSSON REPORTEDLY
APPALLED FIND HIS MEN PROVIDING BASIC TRAINING TO VIETNAMESE
RECRUITS. ROSSON QUOTED AS PRIVATELY SAYING: "THIS WASTE
MANPOWER. SHOULD SHIFT THESE PEOPLE TO WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS
IN COMPANY AND BATTALION SIZE GROUPS. THEY SHOULD GIVE SAME
TRAINING THEY HAVE AND THEN GO INTO 22 VC AREAS NOBODY HAS

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BEEN INTO FOR 15 YEARS." HUSSON ALSO REPORTEDLY CRITICAL OF "VIETNAMESE REFUSAL TAKE OFFENSIVE AGAINST VC IN ANY MEANINGFUL WAY."

F. SECDEF TAKES LESS PESSIMISTIC VIEW. STATES EFFECTIVENESS U.S. AID TO GVN FORCES "GREATLY INCREASED OVER PAST SEVERAL MONTHS." POINTS TO MUCH MORE FAVORABLE RATIO OF VC KILLED OR CAPTURED AND LESSER NUMBER GUERRILLA ATTACKS.

G. REFERRING TO GVN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM, ANONYMOUS OFFICER CLAIMS DIEM MAKING LITTLE EFFORT EXPLAIN TO PEOPLE REASON FOR FORCED MOVES. "THIS CREATING VAST RESERVOIR RESENTMENT." CLAIMS MUCH MORE MUST BE DONE BREAK CONTACT BETWEEN VC AND VILLAGERS. ANOTHER OFFICER CRITICAL OF GVN HAVING TREATED MONTAGNARDS AS OUTCASTS.

H. DIEM OPPOSED CENTRALIZING HIS COMMAND STRUCTURE FOR FEAR PROVINCIAL LEADERS MIGHT EMERGE WHO COULD CHALLENGE HIS POWER.

I. WAR MUST BE FOUGHT MOSTLY BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE. US COULD NOT DO JOB ALONE WITHOUT BEING DEFEATED AS DECISIVELY AS FRENCH.

2. SEPARATE STORY NY TIMES (AP) FROM SAIGON STATES:

A. HUGE GVN OFFENSIVES PLANNED ALONG CLASSIC LINES AND GAIN LIMITED RESULTS. IN ONE OPERATION, 2,300 GVN TROOPS KILLED ONLY 43 GUERRILLAS. STILL TENDENCY FIGHT FROM ROADS

AND RIVERS AS FRENCH DID. M113 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER
HAS FAILED NAVIGATE RIVERS ON TWO OCCASIONS. HEAVY U.S.
WEAPONS OF LIMITED USE BECAUSE LACK OF ROADS.

3. REQUEST YOUR FRANK COMMENTS OPIN CABLE RE THESE
STORIES.

END OF MESSAGE